# JOSEPH JACHETTA

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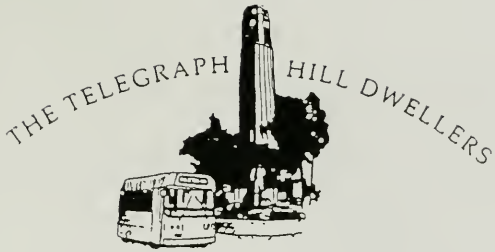


P.O. Box 330159 San Francisco, CA 94133

## BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FORM

HUSBAND (FULL NAME) Joseph James Jachetta
BORN (DATE) 11/29/1924 PLACE 334 Vallejo Street, San Francisco
MARR. (DATE) 7/26/1947 PLACE San Francisco · St. Francis Church
DIED (DATE) _____ PLACE _____
BUR. (DATE) _____ PLACE _____
HUSBAND'S FATHER (NAME) Joseph Jachetta DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH 1895 San Francisco
DATE & PLACE OF DEATH 8/16/1965 San Francisco DATE AND PLACE OF MARRIAGE 1/1/1921 - Sts. Peter + Paul
HUSBAND'S MOTHER (NAME) Amelia Gallo DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH 1899 San Francisco
DATE & PLACE OF DEATH 8/21/1967 San Francisco

WIFE (FULL NAME) Lucy Accurso
BORN (DATE) 10/13/1925 PLACE Brooklyn, NY
DIED (DATE) _____ PLACE _____
BUR. (DATE) _____ PLACE _____
WIFE'S FATHER (NAME) John Accurso DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH 1892 Camporeale, Sicily
DATE & PLACE OF DEATH 1983 San Rafael, CA DATE & PLACE OF MARRIAGE 1924 New Orleans, Louisiana
WIFE'S MOTHER (NAME) Josephine Molay DATE & PLACE OF BIRTH 1905, New Orleans
DATE & PLACE OF DEATH 1979 San Rafael, CA

| SEX M/F | CHILDREN (FULL NAMES) IN ORDER OF BIRTH | WHEN BORN MO/DA/YR. | WHERE BORN TOWN/COUNTY/STATE/COUNTRY | MARRIED DATE & TO WHOM | WHEN DIED MO/DA/YR. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 F | Linda | 5/14/1948 | San Francisco | C. Gribble | |
| 2 M | John | 7/7/1950 | San Francisco | Brenda Biermann | |
| 3 M | James | 4/4/1953 | San Francisco | Karen McDonald | |
| 4 F | Laura | 9/26/1956 | San Francisco | Brian McLeran | |
| 5 F | Stephane | 10/21/1959 | San Francisco | Lawrence Hart | |
| 6 F | Rossana | 5/11/1962 | San Francisco | Timothy Smythe | |

HUSBAND'S GRANDPARENTS
*(P) Fortunato Jachetta — Grimaldi, Calabria, Italy
Concetta La Grande — " " "
*(M) Giacomino Gallo — Bargene, Genoa Italy
Rosina Bonelli — " " "

WIFE'S GRANDPARENTS:
*(P) Antonio Accurso — Camporeale, Sicily
Lucia Rizzuto
*(M) Salvatore Molay* (changed from Mule by sons)
Antonina Casesi

*P = PATERNAL *M = MATERNAL

PROJECT: TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS ORAL HISTORY

TRANSCRIPT DATE: May 23, 1999

INTERVIEW DATE: April 19, 1999

NARRATOR: Joseph Jachetta

INTERVIEWER: Audrey Tomaselli

[ ]: [Transcriber's Comments]

[Joe Jachetta lives in Greenbrae, California, where this interview takes place. However, he is the proprietor of the Parkview Beauty Salon on Union Street in San Francisco -- right across the street from Washington Square. Last year he celebrated the 50th anniversary of his business in North Beach.]

AUDREY: Joe, when we talked last week, you told me that not only were you born In North Beach, but your parents were also. Is that right?

JOE: That's absolutely true. A vanishing species.

AUDREY: Yes, you have very deep roots in North Beach. That's very special. We also talked about the fact that you can remember your Grandfather. You were seven when he died, is that correct?

JOE: That's correct.

AUDREY: Can you tell me about him?

JOE: Well, by the time I came along, you know, he had heart trouble, so he was very, very pampered. My Mother took excellent care of her Father. And he was pretty frail, where he couldn't walk up and down stairs. And all of a sudden he was dead. So I really don't know what I can tell you other than that.

AUDREY: Did he live with you?

JOE: Yes.

AUDREY: So you got to see him on a daily basis?

JOE: Oh yes. We were very close. I remember his funeral.

AUDREY: What do you remember about the funeral?

JOE: There are a couple of things that I remember about that funeral. One of them is leaning over and kissing him for the last time. And I remember how different it felt kissing someone who is dead. That is something I don't think many people experience. And then I remember crying [some tears], you see I'm a pretty emotional person. And having an uncle kind of scold me for it ... "men don't cry". And I cried anyway.

AUDREY: Of course. So you obviously felt very much of a loss ...

JOE: Well, yes. I suppose it takes time to get over not having someone

around that you're used to.

AUDREY: Did he tell you stories about the old country?

JOE: Well, in the building we lived in we were mostly family. And, you know, they all came from the same town in Genoa. I know a lot about the stories, what I used to call the old days. We were just a very happy close-knit family through the Depression. Everybody got along. I never missed a meal. I didn't even know there was a Depression. Except that everybody was poor. You know, and I thought that we were just as poor as anybody. But I later found out there were other people in the neighborhood who, you know, were not as fortunate as I was.

AUDREY: So let's see. You were born in what year?

JOE: 1924

AUDREY: '24. So you were about 7 when the Depression started?

JOE: Right.

AUDREY: Do you remember a dramatic change in how your life was from, say, when you were 5 and then ...

JOE: No, actually no. You know, things went along easily as I see it. You know we had less money and less money and less money. And it went so gradual that, I don't know, I just became used to it.

AUDREY: Do you remember ... was your Grandfather so old that he couldn't come to the table?

JOE: No. He had the family curse. Angina. We all inherit that ... thing. And it wasn't like now, you know. He'd still be alive if it were today. No one in my family has ever lived past the age of 67. Except me.
AUDREY: So when he [your Grandfather] came to the table, was he always at the head of the table?

JOE: Yes.

AUDREY: What do you remember about meals with him?

JOE: I really have to search my memory for this one, but I remember my Grandfather having a jug of wine alongside, and instead of putting this big straw-encased jug on the table, if you wanted more wine you just handed your glass down and he filled it. From that one container.

AUDREY: You're gesturing as if the container was on the floor next to him?

JOE: On the floor and sometimes he would put it on his shoulder [and pour] just for fun, you know.

AUDREY: Did he make his own wine?

JOE: Yes. [Chuckle] No matter what, they made 200 gallons of wine every year, every year, every year. I remember in our basement (I guess it was his basement), [there was] never less than maybe a thousand gallons of wine in

the basement -- aging just right. I remember the canning of tomatoes, for instance. I can smell the wine being made downstairs with these gigantic presses. They just went round and round and round and strained until they got every drop.

AUDREY: Were you allowed down there to watch them?
JOE: Sure. Absolutely.

AUDREY: I'm trying to imagine what that was like ... was your Grandfather presiding?

JOE: No, no, no. What I'm remembering now comes after my Grandfather passed on. I just know my Grandfather was head of the family, but I don't remember him doing anything physical by the time I came along.

AUDREY: Well, he got the jug of wine over his shoulder ... that was pretty physical! [Laugh]

JOE: Oh yes. I didn't mean he was that incapacitated.

AUDREY: What did he like to eat, do you remember?

JOE: No, I don't. I don't remember. He ate what we all ate, I'm sure. I don't really remember enough to really give you a description. I used to think that he looked like the Pope -- whoever that was at the time. I remember thinking that my Grandfather looked like the Pope [laugh].

AUDREY: What a nice thing! Was he gray, bald?

**Joe's Great Aunt Rosa (Lala Rosa) c. 1910**
**334 Vallejo Street Home**
**(Looking East across Sansome Street)**

JOE: No, actually, in our family we don't seem to go gray. The men get bald, but they don't go gray.

AUDREY: Was he a big man?

JOE: No. I'm actually surprised that I can remember as much as I am remembering. You kind of have to put yourself back in that time so that you can remember. That wine thing at the table -- I don't think I've ever been called on to remember that!

AUDREY: It's a wonderful picture. As children, were you allowed to drink wine?

JOE: Oh, sometimes it would make the water pink. I mean it kind of gave the idea that we were too young to drink wine, but just don't abuse it, you know.

AUDREY: Can you describe where your house was exactly? When you lived with your Grandfather?

JOE: On Vallejo. Number 334. That's the house that I was born in.

AUDREY: Do you have any memory of walking out the door with him? Going for a stroll? Did he go out with you very much?

JOE: No. I tell you, I don't know why I remember as much as I do. I remember he had a hard candy, called a caramelle, in a drawer in his room. And every once in a while it would be a treat if he would decide to give me one

**The Ranch - Sonoma Vineyards**
**Joe's Father (center) c. 1921**

of those. Caramelle. I cannot tell you why I remember that! My memory is just about gone. Well, evidently not ...

AUDREY: You said that every year -- Depression or not -- your family made 200 gallons of wine. Is that because that was the allowed [amount]?

JOE: Yes. At the time you could make so much wine for home consumption. And it so happened that my Grandfather and his sister also had vineyards in Sonoma. And we had a railroad track that went right through the vineyard. And they would pick grapes and send them down to the waterfront [here] and sell them by the ton. We always had ... every year they made wine.

AUDREY: You talked about the smell. Was that ... what kind of feeling does that evoke for you when you think about the smell of the wine?

JOE: I just, I get a pleasant feeling. I came to realize I had a wonderful childhood. Nothing there that I would not like to do if I ever became a child again.

AUDREY: I've never seen wine made at home. Can you draw a verbal picture for me of what you can remember about that process. Did you ever stomp [the grapes]?

JOE: Oh yes. Oh yes. We used to take turns. [The container] was huge ... well not as big as a small room. But pretty big. You needed a ladder to get into it. The truck would stop in front of the house and you'd have these lugs of grapes. And the person delivering the grapes sometimes would put a box on the pavement, so the kids could come around and [take some] right to

begin with. Otherwise we'd be running back and forth stealing grapes from the truck.

AUDREY: So one box was free for the kids?

JOE: That's right.
AUDREY: I guess there were a lot of kids around at that time.

JOE: Oh yes. In fact there would be a ... when a truckload of grapes would come into the neighborhood, there would be like a telegraph system. They would yell "fugi" and someone would pick it up and before you knew it, just like a telegraph, and everybody would meet. That's what the box on the ground was for. If you're gonna do it, do it! There you are. Take what you got free and leave.

AUDREY: What does "fugi" mean?

JOE: I have no idea. I took it to mean a truckload of grapes.
It was amazing. It would go from one to the other. And around the block, if there were other kids playing it would go up several blocks and they'd come down to get the grapes.

AUDREY: Was it considered fun for the kids to stomp [the grapes]? Did they want to do it?

JOE: Oh, I only remember that happening once. And [laugh] someone said it was good for varicose veins! I'm searching my memory like I never searched it before. I don't know why I remember these things!

AUDREY: If the kids didn't do it, did the adults ... I mean was there another way of crushing ...?

JOE: Oh yes, sure. No, what I just described was just one of those things. The grapes would be brought in boxes and then they would have a crusher that crushed them over this press. It was all done from the front of the street to the back of the house -- a box at a time.

AUDREY: Do you remember what the wine tasted like? Was it heavy, or light? Was it all red?

JOE: It was all red. There was one family in the building that was not Italian -- the McGues -- and they used to make white wine. The Italians kinda made fun of it. First time I ever tasted white wine was in their house.

AUDREY: You said the only family in the house that wasn't Italian -- was it a house that accommodated ... how many families?

JOE: There were six flats. Six families.

AUDREY: And you all shared the wine stuff in the basement?

JOE: Oh no, no, no. I guess it came out making two hundred gallons apiece. But it was a cooperative thing. Everybody got together and just made THEIR wine. A barrel for you and a barrel for you and a barrel for you.

AUDREY: But you all shared the same equipment, right?

JOE: That's right.

AUDREY: So it was truly a cooperative, in that sense.

JOE: Yes, that's right. There was never, [laugh] never a shortage of labor.
AUDREY: That is something about that time that is so different from today -- that all the families ...

JOE: Well to say the least ...

AUDREY: Yeah, to say the least. That is a profound change. That five or six families in one house could share equipment and actually have ...

JOE: Well actually, there, it was a working class building and quite often people would come down the back stairs and instead of going down into the basement to get out to the front of the house, they would just walk through my Mother's house [flat]. I remember in the evening sometimes sitting there and we were having dinner around the table, and I just remember people walking through my Mother's house, you know, to get out to the front of the house. And nobody cared. It was just, "Hi, how are you. I'm going out on a date." And what they were saying is, you don't want me to walk down to the basement to go get out to the front of the house. It's just easier to go through your house.

AUDREY: So in order to get out, for some of the people, they had to go all the way down [to the basement} and ...

JOE: No, no, no. If for some reason you were coming down the back stairs and you wanted to get out to the front of the house. Why go all the way down to the basement? You can just walk through Amelia's house. We were on the first floor. And we had the only telephone in the building. And everybody would use that phone. All six flats. We would be having dinner and quite often there would be somebody, you know, phoning. People didn't phone like they do now. Phoning for a doctor. Not only did they use my Mother's phone in the building. They used her phone in the neighborhood.
Nobody had a phone. I told you I was better off than ... [laugh] I never knew that. I was the rich kid on the block!

AUDREY: Did you have any sense of ... was it perfectly OK with her for people to walk through the house?

JOE: Oh, absolutely! Oh, to know my Mother was to be blessed. She had no acquaintances; she just had friends. If you ever came in contact with her [tears] she was your friend. Now, I get talking like that and your interview is gonna go right down the tubes ... I tell you I'm a pretty emotional person. I don't even [remember] what I was saying ...[tape recorder put on pause for a moment]

AUDREY: Well you were saying that to know your Mother was to be blessed. And that you remember being brought up mostly by her ... Now tell me about your Father ... you said he was an amateur boxer?

JOE: He was a boxer and he boxed for the Olympic Club. Bantam weight or feather weight or some such thing.

**Joe's Father, c. 1920**
**1615 Grant Avenue**

AUDREY: That was his hobby?

JOE: Yes. Well he was quite a sportsman before he got married. And I suppose it's no different now ... you're interested in sports and play a lot of sports and finally you get married and you don't have time for the sports. I suppose that is what happened to my Father. He was a basketball player and he was a baseball player. He was a prize fighter, he was everything that's masculine, my Father was.

AUDREY: He was also very handsome ... you showed me that picture of him.

JOE: He was a wonderful man, absolutely wonderful man. I miss him a lot.

AUDREY: By the time you can remember he had stopped with most of the athletics?

JOE: Oh yes. I remember listening to ... You see [laugh] our family also had a radio. It never occurred to me that I had, you know, people next door, people two houses away [came] over to listen to the radio. And it never occurred to me that they had less than I did. Or that they had ... it was just a way of life. I suppose that's what they mean by the good old days, you know.

AUDREY: In the sense that families on the block or families in the building could come over and share ... is that what you mean?

JOE: Yes. You see, there were no ... I would have dinner at night, I would jump the fence through my backyard into the next backyard, run up the stairs and there would be the Dinelli family. And I would walk right into their kitchen and

then go into another room that we used to play Monopoly ... I'd just go in there and wait till they finished having dinner and then they'd come in and we'd play Monopoly. So you talk about the good old days, I think that's something, that's a wonderful feeling. And I find it pretty hard to believe that it's gonna get anywhere near being like that. Things are changing. At least I have those memories. One of the things about getting old, you know, and I am really fortunate, I have that shop there which means a great deal to me. If I were to retire, what would I do? [Laugh] garden? I just built that thing on the side so that I don't have to stoop, and for the first time I'm gonna grow vegetables. And things like that, and that's very fine. I'm sure I would be dead within a year. Instead I have that shop. I drive in every day and the car just knows exactly where to go. And I come home to here. And quite often it's so windy and cold in the City and Lucy and I will have dinner outdoors here. What more could I possibly ask for? I really mean I am so blessed.

AUDREY: And you have the best of both worlds because you have this wonderful place here to enjoy. Yet you have the action and the contacts in the City, people to talk to ...

JOE: Well, my wife [and I] we've talked about my retiring. And I said, "What would I do?" She said, "You'd find a place to go." And I said, "Lucy, I already have a place to go. Ah, that's what I'll do. I'll make that my volunteer work!" Which is just about what I'm doing ... almost.

AUDREY: So last year was your 50th Anniversary in business on the [Washington] Square?

JOE: That's right. In September it'll be 51 years.

AUDREY: And this is your third location? You just keep moving around the Square?

JOE: Well, that theater building [what had been the Palace Theater], my first shop was there ... in the theater building ... it was a theater with a little place for a store on one side and a little place for a store on the other side.

AUDREY: What years were you in that building?

JOE: '48 to '58.

AUDREY: That was your first location? That's what you did immediately after ... when did you get out of the service?

JOE: 1945

AUDREY: What did you do in the interim between '45 and '48, when you opened your shop?

JOE: Well, through a series of circumstances I decided to become a hair stylist. I was a pre-dental student before I went into the Army. And I was mostly overseas. And I wanted to get married so badly and I loved this person that I wanted to marry, but I just couldn't see going back to college. Nowadays it's different. They go to college, they get married, they do a modern love in a garret thing. But it was different then. I had never had a job in my life. And I found that I could (I went to the school of cosmetology),

if I went six days a week, eight hours a day, I could have 1600 hours as prescribed by California law, and I could take a State board and I would have a profession. And that's what I did. I did not like it at all. It's just that I had or have a gift of gab and I must have done something right. Fifty-one years later [laugh] I'm still here. And still doing ...

AUDREY: So when you say you didn't like it, you didn't like going to school?

JOE: I didn't like the job. It had a stigma attached to it that always kinda hung over my head, you know. I don't know, I can't even tell you why or when, I just never gave it a thought. I wish I'd [unintelligible].

AUDREY: Your motivation, then, to change from dental school to hairdressing was because you could get a job sooner so you could get married.

JOE: So that I could get married, that's right.

AUDREY: Did you and Lucy meet before the War?

JOE: Yes, we went to school together. We went to, it was called San Francisco Junior College at the time. And I was taking a pre-dental course there. It's where San Francisco City College is now. That was San Francisco Junior College. And so Lucy and I were really best friends. You might say buddies. And when I went into the service I really missed this friend. And I just knew that I was love with her. And as it is, here we are. I told her about it by mail. You want to hear that?

AUDREY: I'd love to hear that. Four years you were gone?

JOE: Well, I had never told Lucy that I loved her. And I wrote to her like you would write to a friend. And she would answer just like that. And so I really never thought of surviving the War. I couldn't see how I could survive. So I wrote to Lucy something called a blue letter. The envelope is blue. And that's the letter that you don't want censored by your own officers because all mail had to be censored. It was really a surprise to her. She claims to this day that she had no idea. She answered and her letter said, "At the termination of the War when we can look at things in their true perspective, we can talk about this. And in the meantime, yes I will wear your fraternity pin." And it just went on from there. And here we are.

AUDREY: So you had to find the fastest way to get married when you came home!

JOE: We were engaged for two years. I had to finish school, I had to get a job. By that time, you see, Lucy and I were truly, truly meant for each other. The fastest way to get married and not sell men's suits or something for a living, was to be a hair stylist. It was not easy becoming a hair stylist in North Beach. It was not easy at all. And as it was it got easier and easier and easier. Now some of the women I do are women I went to school with, some of them are women who I dated, if you can imagine that. And some of them I have actually done and are still doing for fifty years. So I will stay there just until I don't. It isn't work, you know, it's fun.

AUDREY: When you and Lucy were first married you lived in the neighborhood I presume?

JOE: Yes, we had a wonderful apartment two buildings away from my Mother's house. It was nice. Someone added a floor to this house so it was like a little penthouse. We had four rooms and fourteen windows and they all overlooked the Bay and the bridge and Treasure Island and everything. That was a fun time.

AUDREY: You worked for somebody else before you opened your own business?

JOE: Oh sure. Well, not too many. My first job was at the Canterbury Hotel and they wouldn't give me time to go on a honeymoon so I quit. And the government helped me out on that because there was something called fifty-two twenty club or something, where they gave you twenty dollars a week for fifty-two weeks. I don't remember.

AUDREY: You mean if you worked for somebody for 52 weeks, then ...

JOE: No, I don't remember but when you finished your schooling, while you were looking for a job they gave you a year to find a job or something like that. And they paid you ... I really, I'm not clear on that at all.

AUDREY: Is that because you were a veteran?

JOE: Oh yes. Oh sure, it was all part of the G.I. Bill of Rights. Can you imagine I could have gone through dental college at the [government's] expense and I didn't? And I am so happy that that has happened. I would be dead if I were a dentist instead of a hair stylist. My work is pleasant.

AUDREY: It took quite a bit of courage to open a business on the Square .. . and I guess some capital.

JOE: Well I borrowed some money from an uncle. He let me have $5,000. And I was working at the Emporium. And this shop became available, or it was for sale. So Lucy and I just decided that we'd go in business for ourselves. I had a lot of friends in North Beach, you know. So I did! And I took a friend with me as a partner. And we paid off the debt in six months. And he and I were partners for 34 years. Until it finally got to him and he had a nervous breakdown. In those days you didn't quit when you were burnt out. The only time you could quit was when it was too late.

AUDREY: How come he got burnt out and you didn't?

JOE: Because I enjoyed center stage and he didn't. That's why. I ended up enjoying what I do. Incidentally, you'd do yourself a favor if you go to that Salesian show.

AUDREY: I know. Well that was my next question. I wanted to get to that ...when you said stage that prompted my next question.

JOE: Well, you will do yourself a disfavor if you don't go to this production.

AUDREY: I will go . For sure. Wild horses wouldn't keep me away! But I wanted to get into your whole, there's so much to talk with you about, and I'm supposed to be focusing on the neighborhood. But your life is so fascinating and it's so entwined with the neighborhood that anything about you includes the neighborhood, in a way, and your descriptions. .... There are

two questions: I wanted to back up for a minute. One, the first apartment you and Lucy shared -- what streets was that on?

JOE: On Vallejo between Sansome and Montgomery.

AUDREY: So that was on the East side of the Hill.
JOE: Yes, the East side of the Hill. And for less than a thousand dollars we outfitted the whole four room apartment including the dining room set, a washing machine, sofas, beds, mattresses, everything, stove, everything for a thousand dollars.

AUDREY: Where'd you get the thousand dollars?
JOE: I don't remember. I think we put it on a payment plan. I really don't remember where that thousand dollars came from.

AUDREY: How much did you pay in rent?

JOE: Twenty-five dollars. And five dollars under the table because the landlord could get more for it if we weren't there and so we gave him a $25 check and $5 in cash.

AUDREY: Is the building still there?

JOE: Oh yes. Oh yes. It's still there. That's another story. The building is still there. The people who bought it kind of did it over in a pseudo Victorian style with shingles in the front of it and painted it purple. And I drive by it every once in a while and it's interesting ... I don't go by it and say what did

they do. It's very interesting.

AUDREY: So that's the apartment you had [with Lucy]? The house that had been painted purple?

JOE: Oh no, that's the house that had belonged to my family. That's number 334. Just two houses away from that was our apartment.

AUDREY: And what does it look like today?

JOE: Pretty much the way it did. It looks, in fact, the way it did . They've done nothing to it.

AUDREY: So that few blocks of Vallejo apparently, from your early memory from when you were six or seven, has that block changed very much?

JOE: Oh yes. There were empty lots. Now every space is taken.

AUDREY: So on Telegraph Hill there was a house, then an empty lot; there were spaces?

JOE: Yes there were spaces. A lot of spaces. And now there are no spaces.

AUDREY: When did they start filling up the spaces? After the War?

JOE: Yes. Of course North Beach was pretty dense to begin with. There were a lot of spaces all over the City; but in North Beach maybe there were, as I remember, on this one block a huge lot, a HUGE lot that we used to play

**2-Year Old Joe Feeding the Family Goat**

in. And there was one empty lot, two empty lots in the entire block where I lived. So there was quite a lot of open space. Two lots doesn't seem a lot to you, but to a little child it's a playground.

AUDREY: Sure. You said that your Father was an athlete and a sportsman and you weren't; but that was OK with him.
JOE: It was perfectly OK with him. He was a lovely man and he never ever gave me the idea that he didn't like it. Once, once he did. I came back from the Army and my Father introduced me to his tailor. And I had been a pre-dental student before. And the tailor, I forget his name, said to me, "Well, now that you're out of the service, what are you going to do?" And I was just gonna say, "I'm gonna be a hair stylist," and my Father got in front of me before I could say that and he said, "He's going to dental school." That's the only, only time that I ever ever got a hint of the idea that my Father didn't think it was so great that I had decided to become a hair stylist.

AUDREY: Now you have a whole other side of your life which is music. When did that start? Was that part of your childhood?

JOE: Yes. I grew up in a very musical house. My uncle, to this day I think he had one of the most beautiful tenor voices that I ever heard. My Mother's brother ... who also lived in the house, in the same house. We were a lot of people there, I'll tell you. We had no living room. I really always wanted a living room. And finally my wealthy aunt decided to get a new living room and so, you know, I talked my Mother into letting me sleep on the couch or something in the dining room so that we could have a living room. And I think I got that living room together like two hours before the night of my senior prom so that I could bring a girl home and go into a living room instead of a

bedroom and a bedroom and a bedroom. So I got my living room.

AUDREY: So you gave up your bedroom so that you could have a living room.

JOE: So that WE could have a living room.

AUDREY: And she [your Mother] obviously thought that was fine too.

JOE: Oh well, in fact once you get the ball rolling, first comes in a chesterfield which all of a sudden you have, and then the place doesn't look good with the rug that you have, so we..... it looked quite presentable. And they made draperies. It's like setting a scene, as I remember it now. I think the last time I saw that girl was the night we went to the prom. No, no, we dated a few times.

AUDREY: So this uncle, brother of your Mother, he lived in the same flat or in the same building?

JOE: Well, you know, we get time confused. When we started out my uncle was not married and he lived also with my Grandfather. So there was my Mother and Father, my sister and I and my uncle -- we all shared the same flat. And when my uncle got married, he moved into the top flat in the building and took over where the Irish people who only drank white wine lived. My uncle took over that place and then we ended up everybody in the building being related.

AUDREY: Who owned the building?

JOE: My Grandfather and his sister.

AUDREY: So your musical uncle sang and you loved his voice.

JOE: I loved his voice and I felt that I inherited it. I always liked to sing. Going to high school was, you know, I didn't go to learn. I couldn't fill out the map of the United States If I had to. I went to entertain. I got into any end of the entertainment field that I could. I appeared in rallies and sang and did a lot of things.

AUDREY: What do you remember about music in the home.

JOE: I remember him [my uncle] studying with a rather famous voice teacher. His name was Nino Commel. And anybody who is old enough to [have been] interested in music at that time seems to remember that name.

AUDREY: Was he in the neighborhood?

JOE: No, no he was not. And the thing is I don't think I ever saw the man in my life. But it seems, I don't know, to be associated with someone who had such a reputation. And my uncle did.

AUDREY: Did he perform?

JOE: No. During the Depression, he went to college. That's another thing where I see that I had it better off than a lot of people in my neighborhood. My uncle went off to Santa Clara College. I think my Grandparents were a little bit wealthy. They got rid of it long before I came, which is OK.

AUDREY: Was there a piano in the house?

JOE: Yes. We had a, by virtue of the fact that it was so tall, it was an upright grand. An upright grand piano has a great tone. It's a funny thing, the piano is still in existence. It's been moved around from place to place as the situation with my children changed. But we still have the piano. One of my sons-in-law has refinished it and it's badly in need of tuning, but it's good for honky tonk. But right now, would you believe I don't know where it is. But it's in the family.

AUDREY: Was it your Grandfather's or your Mom's?

JOE: Well, my Grandfather bought it for my Mother and my uncle. My uncle could accompany himself a little bit. And my Mother played little things.

AUDREY: Did the family sit around and sing together?

JOE: No. That was kind of a Sicilian custom. I think if you were to kind of picture the type of Italian that all get together and sing, my family wasn't that way.

AUDREY: What did your uncle sing? Opera?

JOE: He sang opera, yes. I used to tease him. You know how nowadays rock music can really get to you? Well, in those days they had the type of music that, well it sounds so silly. But it didn't sound so silly then. There was a song called "The Music Goes Down and 'Round". And he couldn't stand it. And the only room that you could go into that had a key was the bathroom.

So I used to sing, "Oh the music goes down and 'round, oh, oh, oh [singing] and it comes out there." He'd chase me and I'd go in the bathroom and lock the door and I would stay until he went away. There was a little window in the bathroom, and sometimes I would lock the door and then climb out this little window and he would think that I was still in there, and I would be out on the porch somewhere. Now why could I remember that? I can't imagine why that would pop into my memory at this point in time! Yeah, he sang opera. Nowadays, if you want to hear what your voice sounds like, you could speak into a little thing like you have here [points to tape recorder] and you could hear what your voice sounds like. Well, in those days you couldn't do that. So I had been singing in school and a friend brought me down to a professional recording studio and I made a record. And believe it or not, when I heard the record (they were all thrilled) I hated it. That's not my voice, that's not me. I just hated this record. And so it became a keepsake for my Mother. I forgot it existed. And my daughter picked it up after my Mother died and I've preserved it all these years. And we found someone who could put it on a cassette, because it was on an old 78 disk.

TAPE TWO

And then I heard it for the first time [in years] recently and I thought it was so beautiful. I was sixteen. I'll have to let you hear that sometime. I thought it was so beautiful. It was a young voice. It was like a singer of the day -- Kenny Baker. I was so disappointed in that record that my friend took me down and we duplicated a record album that Kenny Baker had made. That's when I decided that trying to be like my uncle who sang "Vesti La Giuba" and "La Donna E Mobile" was not for me. Those are the things that I had wanted to sing. But I'm a lyric tenor, I'm not a dramatic tenor. And sometimes I say, well I'm a lyric tenor with dramatic qualities.

AUDREY: Do you remember what song you recorded on your first record?

JOE: Yeah. Love Walks In. White Sails.

AUDREY: If your uncle took you down to make a record ...
JOE: No that was not my uncle. No, that was a music teacher in the Junior High School that I was going to who found that I had a voice. I was studying the mellophone -- a French horn -- and he found that I had a voice. And every once in a while I would sing at a rally. Then when I went into high school, they had a club called the Footlights Club. You had to be an entertainer. To get into the Footlights Club you had to audition. So I auditioned with a song that I really loved called "Summertime" from "Porgy and Bess". And it was just right for my lyric tenor voice. I could really totally become, sing that and be Black. I've sung many things in the years past. And if you miss this weekend you really will have missed it.

AUDREY: The junior high school and the high school, were they in the neighborhood?

JOE: They were walking distance because I walked. The junior high was down on Powell and Francisco [Francisco Middle School] and the high school was Galileo [Bay and Polk].

AUDREY: So the music departments encouraged your musical talents and ...

JOE: Well I got so involved in entertaining that I forgot to learn. I'm pretty illiterate.

AUDREY: I don't think so. You're VERY articulate.

JOE: I sang in the Church choir for thirty years here in Marin. When I first came here I was sitting in the front row of the Church and the organist played "Glory Glory Hallelujah" [laugh] and I, in those days, belted that out and, like Uncle Sam, he came over and said, "I want you." And then I got involved in the community choir at the College of Marin . And they think they are very sophisticated. We did Verdi's Requiem with the Marin Symphony. But I did that totally with my ear. I have a very good ear and I was able to learn all that music with the help of a friend from the St. Sebastian choir.

AUDREY: Did you ever take formal music lessons?

JOE: No. But I have always wanted to entertain.

AUDREY: How did you get started [performing] at the Salesians.

JOE: Well, just about everybody I know goes there. Dealing with my friends, starting in business, I've grown very close to a lot of these women. I sort of feel related, you know. And so, they all belong to different Madonna clubs at Sts. Peter and Paul Church. And I'm Genovese. My Father was Calabrese but I don't know much about his family. I was raised in a Genovese house. So I was approached by Madonna Adolorata. That's the Sicilian Madonna. And the Madonna club that I was supposed to belong to was the Madonna della Guardia. That's the Genovese Madonna, you see. And then there's the Madonna del Lume and so forth -- it's the battle between the north and south. I guess I shouldn't have said that! I joined the Sicilian Madonna club --

Madonna Adolorata. And I joined that because most of my clientele were Sicilian. I guess I was a traitor! And it's the best thing I did. They are so much more fun than the Genovese!

AUDREY: And you married a Sicilian too!

JOE: That's right. And with that smile. . . and those two dimples, I had to have this Sicilian lady!

AUDREY: What did that mean that you joined this particular, this Sicilian Madonna club? What did that mean? Was it a musical club?

JOE: No, no. It's a social ... they have a meeting and they spend a lot of time proposing things. They have a dinner at $15.00 per person. And all of the money they collect, at the end of the year they give it to charities. Like The Little Sisters of the Poor and so forth.

AUDREY: So it's a club that both men and women belong to? And you joined it because of your clientele ...

JOE: I joined it because my best friends belonged to the club and I wasn't gonna join a club with the stuffy Genovese [laugh].

AUDREY: So you began entertaining for fund raisers for this charitable ...

JOE: It was a fund raising organization. Yes.

AUDREY: And I guess you became very well known in the neighborhood, not

only for your hairstyling but ...

JOE: Well, I never was a very good hairstylist.

AUDREY: You're a better performer than you are a hair stylist?

JOE: That's right. It's an absolute gift from heaven, you know, that someone like me could be on center stage ...

AUDREY: Well, you say you're not a very good hair stylist. But you've managed to keep customers for fifty years; that says something about your skills.

JOE: Well, I don't know [laugh]. Let me tell you. This sums it up really. I had a customer one day who was leaving and she said, "This was a very nice session."

AUDREY: Was she referring to it as like a therapy session?

JOE: Um hmm. You know there's more truth than poetry to "...only her hairdresser knows for sure".

AUDREY: I just want to get back to your Grandfather again. You mentioned that he was your Mother's Father. And he was a cook for Fior d'Italia. And the first Fior d'Italia was on Broadway?

JOE: The first Fior d'Italia was on Broadway. On the corner of Kearny and Broadway. There's a new restaurant there now [Moonshine]. It had been

**Front Street Restaurant and Boarding House**
**c. 1901**

Vanessi's. I don't know when he started, but the Del Monte family had something to do with finding him a job there when he came to this country. In fact, my Mother was born in the room above the restaurant. And then my Grandfather and his sister and her husband went into business for themselves. They opened a boarding house and restaurant and a bar. I remember my Mother describing a free lunch. Imagine going into this bar; all these cold cuts, free? It was down around Front Street somewhere. Anyhow, that's where they were after Fior d'Italia. That was during the earthquake in 1906. And that's one of the stories told more than once in the family. "Yes! That's what happened." The story goes that the earthquake hit when everyone was asleep. And there was a big chifforobe, they used to call it [high chest of drawers], had fallen in front of the door. And this captain of this barge pushed the door open and took her [my Mother] and brought her down the stairs which were all crooked. And they finally got downstairs. And he herded my Mother and her family down to the waterfront and they all got on this barge which anchored in the middle of the Bay and watched the City burn.

AUDREY: How old was your Mother then?

JOE: Six years old.

AUDREY: And he [the barge captain] rescued her from the room where she was sleeping where the furniture fell down and blocked the door?

JOE: Yes. And many times I remember being up in Sonoma where my aunt lived. And saying, "Oh come on, Mom. Quit being so dramatic." (My Mother was quite dramatic; I don't get this from nowhere!) And my Mother's aunt

said, "No. That's the true story."

AUDREY: Was it from the building on Broadway where she was born [when she was rescued]?

JOE: No. Fior d'Italia is the oldest Italian restaurant in the United States. When my Grandfather cooked for them, or maybe just made salads, I don't know, that was in 1886. I don't know how long it was before they went into business for themselves. But by the time of the earthquake they had this boarding house/restaurant down on Front Street. And the captain of the barge was a tenant.

AUDREY: Was it April 19th? The earthquake? Because today is the 19th. [I subsequently confirmed that the earthquake was on April 18th.]

JOE: What you just said there...I truly believe in synchronicity. I don't believe that anything is coincidental. I have had a horrific life before I ... When I went into the Army I was nineteen and I looked like I was thirteen. And I went into combat. And the reason I'm still here is absolutely astounding, you know. I have come so close to death so many times that it's just miraculous. And I still seem to have that protection. Look at this place. It came from a little beauty salon. It's almost like having a charmed life. I certainly wouldn't want to do it again but it would take an awful lot to repay me for the experiences I've had and I wouldn't trade one little incident; because once you leave something else you go off in a different direction and I would not be here right now if it weren't the way it's supposed to be.

AUDREY: That's amazing to me what you said ... "...it all came from a little

beauty salon." It is extraordinary.

JOE: Yes, well, it also comes from a lot of things. It comes from my wife's family lending us the first $2,000 to get started in a home of our own to build up the equity and sell it and then fortunately happen to have this lot available with this Shangri-la here; it was just meant to be.
AUDREY: How do you think your Grandfather was able to send his children to college?

JOE: Well he didn't send his children to college. He sent his son to college. Girls didn't go to college! What kind of an historian are you? I know that when the Depression was over and my Grandfather was dead and gone, my uncle still had a year to go to finish college and somehow or other my Father and Mother got together the thousand dollars to pay his last year's tuition and he finished college. And then there was the Depression. There were no jobs and here is this man with a, I don't know if he was brilliant but he certainly was college material which I was not. Maybe I wouldn't even have become a dentist. I might have committed suicide before people found out that I'm stupid. What was I saying? Oh he [my uncle] could not find a job and finally there was a job available but you had to have a car. We also had a car that nobody in the neighborhood had, you see. So my Father let my uncle use his car so that he could take this job. He was a salesman for this Rath bacon house. And he kept that job for several years and got married and moved into the top flat. Then came the War and here's a man who has a degree in electrical engineering and so he was all set. How did we ever get that far?

AUDREY: My fault; I asked you. But your Father ... you had a radio, you had

**Joe's Father (Army Air Corps Uniform)**
**And Great Aunt, c. 1917**

a telephone, you had a car. And your Father did all this, or managed to provide these things for you, for the family, by his work as an auto mechanic, is that correct? And he also repaired radios?

JOE: Um hmmm. And he also repaired radios. There was a radio room in the house where one wall was lined with radios and dials and stuff -- you'd think it was a setting for Flash Gordon or something.

AUDREY: This was in the basement?

JOE: This was in the basement.

AUDREY: So did he make money doing this or was it for gratis?

JOE: My Father did mostly everything for gratis. My Father was always making something for someone or fixing something for someone. My Mother's dining room table -- she finally put a blanket over it and an oilcloth on the top of that because he used to fix radios on her dining room table. Because we always had radio parts, you know. In fact, we'd have a family dinner and have to gather the radio parts and get them off the table and then he would always accuse us of losing a part.

AUDREY: So how do you think he was able to do ... was he very frugal, was he, did he work 16 hours a day?

JOE: I suspect that, oh I also didn't tell you ... we also had a refrigerator and we also had an ironer -- a mangle, you know. So I suspect that my Grandparents were kind of wealthy. When my Father and Mother married, my

Father came to live in my Grandfather's house. First my Grandmother died and, it's like Agatha Christie, you know, and then there were none. So I guess the house just started with a bunch of people and ended up with just my Mother and Father and my sister and me.

AUDREY: Did you inherit the house? You and your sister?

JOE: Well, that's a story in itself. We inherited half of the building because half of it belonged to my uncle and ... oh it's a long, boring, a long litigation...

AUDREY: OK. Well we won't go there. You mentioned that your Father's place of business was at the foot of Columbus.

JOE: Yes. Where the housing projects are. There was a garage there on Bay and Columbus. It was Jachetta Brothers Body and Fender Shop. And my Father was the mechanic. I told you he was so mechanically inclined. He was an inventor; he just was a wonderful man. When he was so much younger than I am [now] and so much older, you know, he used to make hearts out of lucite and polish them and polish them and then make necklaces. He was so proud of these hearts he'd carry them around in a little box and show you these hearts. And in-between them he had a way of laminating colors.

AUDREY: That's very touching. Here he was this athlete and boxer. And then he had this very tender side that made hearts and carried them around. It's a sweet story.

JOE: Well, one of the things that my Father and I used to kid one another about, like kidding on the square: I always contended that prize fighting was

barbaric. It had nothing to do with being all masculine or all feminine. It was just barbaric. You'd just want to see how much damage you could do to the other guy's face. My Father had an artificial nose; it had to all be rebuilt because he was smashed so [much] when he was fighting. And lucky he didn't get punchy like some of the people I've met of his time who also did the same thing. I'd say it's barbaric; he called it the manly art of self defense. The manly art of self defense and I'd say barbaric.

AUDREY: So you sparred verbally.

JOE: That's right. And, God, this is something I haven't remembered for a long time: you know, he was dying (he spent the last three months of his life in Notre Dame Hospital and even with the heart trouble that he had he died of cancer) and that was a very hard thing for me. And my Mother was at this hospital day and night. She became part of the hospital. She'd go in the morning and come home at night. Even after my Father died, she'd go back with a birthday cake for everybody that was there. By the time she was in that hospital herself, she was pretty well known. I dare say that those sixteen months that my Mother was in the hospital were very happy ones for her. People would say, "Oh this poor woman being in the hospital all that time." Well she was alive and in the hospital she still went on doing for people. And you know how she got around that? She gave ME. "My son will do your hair. Oh my son will do your hair." I used to do hair on Sundays and Mondays in Notre Dame Hospital! She had nothing to give, but she had several of these hand-knitted afghans, and somebody would say, "What a good looking afghan!" She'd say, "Take it." You don't know. Somebody like my Mother ... wow ... she was a pistol. And one of the things that bothered her was we would go to the mortuary and she would see somebody lying in

the coffin with an orchid or orchids all around. And my Mother would say, "I bet she never had an orchid in her life. When you lay me out don't give me any orchids. If you've got any orchids give them to me now!" You know what that did for me? My Mother was in the hospital for sixteen months and there wasn't a time in that sixteen months when she didn't have an orchid. And she'd give it away. When she was laid out, if there were any orchids on the flower pieces we took them off and sent them over to St. Francis Church. St. Francis was my Church. I was baptized at Sts. Peter and Paul but St. Francis was a parish Church and my Mother became a fixture. I started business with [laugh] people from the Catholic Ladies' Aid from the St. Francis Church.

AUDREY: Were you married in that Church?

JOE: I was married in that Church. In those days you were supposed to be married in the girl's parish. And my wife's pastor was a tyrant. He was an Irish tyrant! The Church would have been better off without him, you know. And you were supposed to get married in her [the girl's] Church. But I had been a fixture in St. Francis Church. I was even sextant of St. Francis Church. I served mass there for ten years; then their sextant was drafted and I knew where all the doors were, so I became sextant of St. Francis Church. And all of a sudden all of the altar cloths were being ironed and washed. They were paying me $25 a month and my Mother started doing all these other tasks in the Church. So when I announced that I was going to get married, my pastor said, "Well, of course, you'll be married here." I asked how I could get around the other guy. He said, "Well, he's a friend of mine and I'll tell him that I want you to be married here." So we went over to Father Cantwell at St. Elizabeth to sign papers. And he came, in absolutely

**Joe's First Holy Communion, c. 1931**
**Vallejo Street Home**

going to give his permission for us to be married at St. Francis (out of your own parish, you know). And so we had an earthquake. And the picture on the wall kind of tilted. And, you know what I feel like saying right now? I feel like saying that bastard! He said, "It's a sign!" And he wouldn't sign the papers and he sent us away!

AUDREY: What year was this?

JOE: Oh I guess it was around 1947.

AUDREY: You must have been very happy to see St. Francis reopened last year.

JOE: Oh I'm very happy. I find that one of the most peaceful places! I don't go there as often as I should. But I do go. And I can just sit there and ... I know St. Francis Church, I know every door, I know places that they don't know. I remember ... if you go into St. Francis Church sometime and look straight up you'll see this row of lights going down the center. I used to climb up into the steeple and over the top of that and lie flat on that and look down and I could see the top of everybody's head. During the service!

AUDREY: [laugh] How old were you?

JOE: Oh, I don't know. I had to be in my teens because I was sextant. In order to change the globe you had to pull it up on the chains and change it and then let down. But around the fixture there was a lot of space. So you could look down.

AUDREY: Is it still the same today?

JOE: Sure it is. Next time you're there, look up!

AUDREY: You said that your family had a refrigerator. Other families didn't?

JOE: Nobody. They came down and made jello [in our refrigerator].

AUDREY: But what did they do for preserving food?

JOE: Well, they had coolers that would be outside the window, maybe where there was a draft. They did not have refrigerators. In fact, there was always somebody putting something into my Mother's refrigerator. It was a Frigidaire. So my Father who I told you was kind of like a genius at [fixing things], when we decided to get another refrigerator, he took the Frigidaire and put it in the basement and somehow or other converted it into a freezer. People would go fishing and put it in our freezer! And it was our old Frigidaire. In North Beach where Il Pollaio is [west side of Columbus between Union and Green] there was a store called Ratto that dealt with Maytag washers and the like. And Frigidaire gave a prize to the store that could get the oldest turned in [Frigidaire]. They would get a humungous prize and the person who HAD the Frigidaire would get, they'd buy it from them or something ... but the thing that sticks in my mind -- the one that we had that my Mother gave to the garbage company was much older than the one that they got [that won the prize]!

AUDREY: Was it an ice box?

JOE: It was a refrigerator. It made ice cubes. And the motor was underneath it. And it was a HUGE motor. The motor was maybe a third the opening of the refrigerator itself. But we had a Frigidaire! One family up the street -- they were also Genovese -- as a matter of fact, [laugh] she's still a client of mine. As a kid she was a lot older than I was. And we had a party line and in those days nobody had their own line, you had a party line and she was on our line. She used to come on and say it was an emergency. My Mother was a softie, you know. And I'd say, "It's not an emergency. She's talking to her sister." I was listening!

AUDREY: You said the people who didn't have refrigerators had coolers?

JOE: Yes, in the lightwells. One side of the house, in our house, was exposed and you could do that. It got the morning sun, but in the afternoon it was cool in the lightwell. And they used to put boards across from one window to another and then put food out there to stay cool. And you had to do more shopping. You know, there was a grocery store on every corner. On our block we had a grocery store across the street. There was a little alley called Prescott Court, almost across the street from my house and there was a grocery store -- Gianinni's. Lisa's. They'd go to Lisa's and buy a roll of butter instead of a cube of butter; it was a cube but they called it a roll. And that was 3 cents. And then this BIG display of penny candy. You could just get up and look down at this thing, and I mean two or three for a penny. I remember going to Lisa's. And I remember that on the other corner [Vallejo and Montgomery] there was Verachi. That was a grocery store.
AUDREY: So these stores were on Vallejo at the top of the hill there?

JOE: Vallejo and Montgomery. Now there is some architect whose landlady is

[laugh] the one who was on our party line who is still my customer! She's rich, rich, rich, rich. She's changed a lot. She's become quite a bit more humble than she used to be.

AUDREY: The other thing I wanted to ask you ... you mentioned La Fiesta night club.
JOE: The La Fiesta night club. When my Father and [his] brother decided to go out of business -- one of the pride things was they did not go bankrupt, they just went out of business -- that was a big thing. People treat bankruptcy nowadays as, well, you can always go bankrupt. The worst thing you could have [then] that caused you to be depressed, one of the worst things that could happen to you would be to go bankrupt. Nowadays it's just, well, you know, you can always go bankrupt. It was unheard of. My uncle fell in love with a girl from Healdsburg -- a pretty lucrative family (I always thought that had something to do with it). So they went out of business. And he became a country boy and it soon became impossible. And the brother [then decided to] live in the City. And when they got the opportunity they moved about five houses away from my Mother. And my uncle's wife is now old; she lives in Healdsburg. The two aunts I have -- the wife of my Father's brother and the wife of my Mother's brother. I still have two aunts. We're pretty close to them. We invite them to weddings.

AUDREY: So La Fiesta was built on the site of ...

JOE: La Fiesta -- they took the garage itself and changed the front of it a little bit and as you went in ... I remember dating my wife and bringing her there and saying, "This used to be my Father's garage. His office was right here." As a matter of fact, the night I formally proposed marriage to my

wife we won a rumba contest in the Latin American restaurant called La Fiesta where my Father's garage was.

EXTENSION OF INTERVIEW WITH JOE JACHETTA.

AUDREY: It is May 12th and this interview is taking place at the Parkview Salon on Union Street in North Beach. Joe, I just was so impressed with the performance that I had to come back and ask you some more questions. What occurred to me was ... I guess I'd like to know more about the Salesian Boys' and Girls' Club. It was once just the Salesian Boys' Club is that right?

JOE: That's right.

AUDREY: How long back does it go ... how old is the organization?

JOE: Well, actually I couldn't tell you really. But maybe fifty years or more. Sixty years perhaps. [Further research indicates that the Salesian Boys' Club was founded in 1921 -- more than seventy-five years ago.] Oddly enough I never belonged to the Salesian Boys' Club. When I was a teenager, St. Francis Church was our parish. And this [Sts. Peter and Paul] was called the Italian National Church. And we had a club that we organized, my age group organized, and we called it the St. Francis Boys' Club. We gave dances. During the summer we gave dances every Saturday night.

AUDREY: You mean as a teenager you and your friends organized it? You didn't have any adults to supervise ... or a priest ... or

JOE: No. We did not. We had a priest looking over our shoulder, but we got it together. We had several young men who played instruments. We had a dance band, a good dance band. And we would give dances in the basement of the Church and we would turn the lights down low and the priest would come and turn them up again and we would turn them down ... And we had an artificial moon up on the stage for effect. And we even tried dancing just by the light of the moon and that didn't go over very ...

AUDREY: About what year was that?

JOE: I would say between 1940 and 42.

AUDREY: So there's a recreation hall in the basement of St. Francis Church?

JOE: Well, there's a Church hall where they would have whist games and bridge games and spaghetti dinners and things like that. And we would take it over for our dances. And we had a club room that was an unused room above the sacristy of the Church, and we used that for our meetings. We also played basketball for the Sons of Italy. We played against other clubs -- I don't think the Salesians. Actually I was not athletic so I, even though I had shorts and a sweatshirt on, I didn't do much playing. I was better at organizing things.

AUDREY: I heard that the Salesian Boys' Club [had volunteers] from some businessmen and that they helped what he termed "the ruffians" to get it together, taught them how to apply for jobs and that sort of thing.

JOE: That's right. And they also had scholarships to USF. And it still goes

on today. And it's open to any member of the club who wants to go to college.

AUDREY: So the entertainment a few weeks ago [that you participated in], was that a fund raiser?

JOE: Yes. For the Salesian Boys' and Girls' Club.

AUDREY: I saw on the stage what looked to me like three generations of ...

JOE: That's right. There are some people there from the choir in the Church -- the older people (three of whom are members of the Opera Chorus -- their training was obvious). And the older teens, some up into their early twenties now, are all Salesian boys and girls who keep coming back to perform.

AUDREY: It's a wonderful community ... and fairly unique, I think.

JOE: Absolutely unique. It's just wonderful and they just do so much for the young men and women of the neighborhood here. Even [those from] out of the neighborhood.

AUDREY: I heard a rumor that you used to do Rose Pistola's hair.

JOE: Yes. I did Rose Pistola's hair for fifty years.

AUDREY: I think it would be nice for posterity to know who this woman was. Apparently she had a restaurant on the Square ... is that correct?

JOE: Yes, where the Washington Square Bar and Grill is was not Rose Pistola, but it was a bar called Pistola. And Pistola was her husband. And she would cook for people who phoned her and said, "I'm coming". And sometimes she would just be there cooking for her husband and herself and maybe a couple of the regulars. And sometimes my partner and I would call her and we would go. However, after a while (my salon at the time was at the corner of Powell and Union and we worked up into the wee hours at night) and we would go to Rose's at midnight and she would save dinner. We would have dinner there in the back in the kitchen and she would have all these wonderful things -- always some kind of fish. And potatoes and bell peppers.

TAPE THREE

AUDREY: We were talking about Rose Pistola and how she ... it was a bar, as I understand it, but for special people...

JOE: When she had cooked for her husband and herself at night and for anybody that wanted to ... you had to call her because she had to know if she was cooking for two or ten, but she would cook for as many people as could sit around the table.

AUDREY: And this was in the back?

JOE: No. This was right in the bar. She had a big kitchen, bigger than what she needed. But at one time they had other things. Rose, at one time, offered something called "Spaghetti Express". And that was next door. And she cooked spaghetti and she had people on motorcycles who would deliver it.

AUDREY: Spaghetti on motorcycles, wonderful. So that was in the 40's?

JOE: Yeah. Very late 40's, early 50's. It got to be too much.

AUDREY: What did she look like?
JOE: I don't know how to describe Rose. I have pictures of her someplace in here. I can't find them right now. Let's see, she was a small woman, not fat, but solid. Actually Rose would have three grand openings a year [laugh]. She would change all the pictures on the wall and paint or do something, then she would have a grand opening. She would set out a buffet table with calamari and egg plant and all that and invite a lot of people. And people would come to her grand opening and, naturally they would buy drinks and she would serve them the food.

AUDREY: So was she a good businesswoman?

JOE: Well, I don't know. She just seemed to do what came naturally and it seemed to be right. She never thought anything out. Kind of like me!
You know, this salon. All of this stuff comes from a salon that was at least three or four times bigger than this.
And when I had to move I didn't have time to measure. It just came up and it was either you take it or you don't. I did. And we just moved everything here. And everything magically fit. Who would have ever thought you could get nine driers in a space like this. So we thought, well, we'll just put them down the middle of the floor. We just drilled some holes in the floor and brought the electricity up, and put the driers in and they fit. The same with this mirror.

AUDREY: It's absolutely flush against the wall. You didn't have to cut it.

JOE: Right.

AUDREY: When did you move to this location.
JOE: Ten years ago.

AUDREY: So first you were over where the theater was.

JOE: I was there for ten years. And then the furniture store moved out and we took that. The corner of Powell and Union where the restaurant Vino [now] is. And we were there for thirty years. That's forty years. And the remainder has been here.

AUDREY: I'm trying to imagine what Washington Square looked like when you were a kid. What's your earliest memory of Washington Square?

JOE: I remember that it was a tree lined park. It had benches that ran in a kind of irregular line through the park. Paths that went through the park. And these benches lined the park from both sides there. And all the dirt was held in by maybe a ten inch high little wall. As a child I used to make believe that was a tightrope. And then as an adult one day I was walking by and I saw it and I just forgot that all those years had passed, so I tried using it as a tightrope [again]. Most people were looking at this old man walking along this and I thought, um-hmmm. That was one of the signs, one of the first signs. They took the wall out and now the grass is flush with the street.

AUDREY: So your memory is that there were many, many more trees ...

JOE: They were all willow trees. And they just hung over so gracefully. And the benches were under them and on both sides of the walk. It was a wide walk with benches on both sides. And people would come to the piazza on Sundays. The park would be full of people ... people just sitting and relaxing. And mothers ... I remember coming here with my Mother. And we lived on the other side of the Hill on Vallejo and Montgomery.

AUDREY: So the women would come with the kids and sit and talk ...

JOE: That's right. And men ... a lot of Italian men. If you read Ferlinghetti's poems about Washington Square, that will tell you exactly, exactly. I have a copy of his poems somewhere; it's called, I think, The Italians of Washington Square. And it is just beautiful.

AUDREY: Why do you suppose the trees came out?

JOE: Well, I think they wanted to spend some money. That they were dangerous, that there was a danger of ... they were old and they were over the benches. And people were sitting there. I think it was working [in a way] so that they had to decide to fix it even though it wasn't broken. And then there were other things too that I remember. When they did remodel the park, I had the drawing of what it was supposed to look like in the window of my other shop, because they wanted private donations and all that. And in this park there was supposed to be a fountain. And it never materialized. [But] that was in the original plan.

AUDREY: Then it wasn't the City which did the remodeling? It was privately funded.

JOE: Uh, I'm not sure about that. I just remember the plans were in my window. And you could donate to it. Now if you want to you can have your name put on a bench or something.

AUDREY: But there aren't all that many benches anymore, are there?

JOE: Well, the park before was very much like a park that you would see in Italy. It was just tree-covered walkways. You could go in there when it was raining, and if you walked on the paths you would not get wet.

AUDREY: When you went on Sundays with your Mom to the park, was it a time to put on your best clothes? Was it a promenade?

JOE: Well, see I was born on the other side of the Hill. This was, until I went to Junior High School, this was like another world to me over here. I told you I was a St. Francis boy and not a Sts. Peter and Paul boy. So this wasn't our ... Not only that. But my Mother was born here. And so was my Father. My Mother was born on Broadway. My Father [was born] right over here off Grant Avenue. And my Mother would take us to Golden Gate Park. Something called Neptune Beach, which was in Alameda. Other places. She would take us out of the neighborhood. And I don't think I ever saw the playground until I went to Francisco [Junior High]. So I guess I'm not the right person to ask about the park. I remember going there, but maybe to a wedding across the street. And the park was always full of people whenever I saw it. And then when I went to Francisco, then I remember the park still

being the way it was when I was a child. It was like that even when I started in business. They didn't talk about remodeling until, I'm not quite sure, but after the late forties or early fifties.

AUDREY: Well, you said the plans were in the window at ...

JOE: Over there, well I guess it would have to be, maybe, middle fifties.
AUDREY: When you said it used to be like a park in Italy, I just had ... I remember being in a park in Italy on Sunday and, still today, everybody is dressed beautifully -- and the children especially are dressed beautifully.

JOE: That's called "passeggiata".

AUDREY: Passeggiata. And that's why I asked if, on Sundays, when you came here it was more promenade or ... it wasn't that often for you ... so ...

JOE: Right, right.

AUDREY: It's very interesting, though. You were talking, at the most, four blocks. But you were in another world.

JOE: That's right. In fact I had a call this morning from someone who was my next door neighbor when I was, maybe, five years old, to tell me that his sister died. I do her hair. And we grew up together. And I got on the phone and I called several people from the old neighborhood. And I called my sister, and she's going to call this one and that one. And the funeral will be [unintelligible]. And you can bet your life that everybody we grew up with will be there.

AUDREY: And they were all on that side of the Hill.

JOE: And they were all on that side of the Hill. The old thing, you know, the other side of the mountain.

AUDREY: And just four blocks away.
JOE: That's right.

AUDREY: What made people settle on that side rather than on this side? Was it because they came from the same part of Italy?

JOE: Yes. Down this way there were mostly Sicilians, say north of Filbert Street, because they were fishermen. So it was the logical place ... near the water. My family were cooks. They had a restaurant during the earthquake ... down on Front Street. And that's one of the things that I can remember my Mother telling me about was the San Francisco earthquake. My kids ask me to tell them about the old days. Well, how do you equal horse and buggy and St. Bernard dogs and stuff like that. I don't have all that stuff to tell them. I can tell them about St. Francis Boys' Club and dances and things like that. But never the stories that my Mother told me and the pictures that my Mother had shown me.

AUDREY: I don't know ... you've told me some pretty good stories. Really wonderful stories. Wait till you see it in print! One of the reasons I was asking you about Washington Square Park is that, apparently we're going to get landmark status for it which means that they won't be able to put a garage under it. And it's also celebrating its 150th year... in the year 2000.


**Grandpa Gallo's Front Street**
**Restaurant and Boarding House, c. 1901**

JOE: Oh really?

AUDREY: Yeah. It was established in 1850.

JOE: Well, my Grandparents came here in 1868 or 69. The same year that the Fior d'Italia Restaurant was established.
AUDREY: And your Grandfather was the cook?

JOE: Well, that's what they told me, but maybe he was, he'd just come from Italy and he wasn't a chef in Italy, but he was probably a salad man or something like that. But he did end up cooking. And he was an excellent chef -- enough to open his own place on Front Street.

AUDREY: Do you remember the name of it?

JOE: Yes. I have a picture of it. I have a picture of the whole crew standing in the front of the restaurant. Actually it looks like the street goes right into the restaurant. It looks like they had a dirt floor inside. And these wonderful people with aprons on in front of their restaurant.

AUDREY: So that was your Grandfather. And did your parents work in the restaurant too?

JOE: No. My Mother was six years old [when the earthquake happened]. And by the time she grew up they had built a house on Vallejo between Sansome and Montgomery. And before that they bought property in Sonoma. Fifty acres. They had a vineyard up there. And they had the "ranch" as we

called it, and the building here together. Brother and sister. And we kept a room for ourselves up in the house. And my Uncle kept a flat here for himself when he came to the City; he had a place to go. And when we went to the country, we had a place to go.

AUDREY: So that was your Mother's parents. They did well, I guess, with that restaurant. If he started out as a salad maker at Fior d'Italia, he certainly did well.

JOE: Well, I never knew where this money came from. I never realized that we were better off than other people. I never knew that, until later years at some of these get-togethers. I'd hear things like, "You were rich. We were poor."

AUDREY: You went to Francisco Middle School when ...

JOE: I graduated from Francisco in 1939 and then I went to Galileo.

AUDREY: Where did you go before Francisco?

JOE: Washington Irving ... on Broadway between Sansome and Montgomery. That's a school that has gone through many political shenanigans. They closed it recently because they said it wasn't earthquake proofed. And yet, I had to go to a school up here that was called Garfield Annex for half a day while they earthquake proofed that building. I was a student there when they earthquake proofed the building. And yet they closed it because it wasn't earthquake proofed. And then they opened it up again for something else as though the only lives that are important are children's lives. So as long as

[there are] no children, it's OK, it's earthquake proof enough. And now they've opened it again as another school. And that was earthquake proofed when I was a child.

AUDREY: Which would have been in the twenties ...

JOE: It would have been in the early thirties.
AUDREY: Was that done in reaction to having had an earthquake at that point?

JOE: I don't believe so. It's a brick building.

AUDREY: So you walked to school, then, from Vallejo, you walked down that side of the Hill to Broadway ...

JOE: There was an alley that ended at the back door of the school. And the other end of the alley was directly opposite my Mother's house. So to go to school I just crossed the street and ran down the alley. And I was always the last one there. I still do that. I have an appointment at 2:00 o'clock, I leave at five minutes to two. Because it's only over the Hill, you know.

AUDREY: That was your early training....And then, you had to walk to Francisco Middle School .... and had to leave six minutes before ...

JOE: [laugh] Well, then I was never late. Because we were, on our block, maybe a half a dozen or more boys and girls [who] were in the same class at Washington Irving that went to school [at Francisco], so we all left at the same time. We walked together ... and wait for me and ... you don't want to

be late because you'd have to walk to school by yourself, you see. So when I went to Francisco I was on time.

AUDREY: What was the route you took, do you remember?

JOE: Yes. I would go through that alley, through the schoolyard of Washington Irving, down Broadway, up Columbus Avenue, and down Powell. And then when we went to Galileo, we took that same route except [we] walked to Bay and then walked in that direction.

AUDREY: And you always went with a group from your neighborhood?

JOE: Um-hmmm. We were all about the same age.

AUDREY: Did you encounter, on the way to and from school (the fact that you were in a group was good), ... were there any problems with gangs or other kids or ...

JOE: Never, never, never, never. There was nothing. Maybe there were a couple of bullies. But everybody knew them and you just stayed clear of them or you were bullied ... and I certainly had that happen. But never gangs. The only gangs I belonged to were when we got together to go to the serials on Friday. I once belonged to a gang and we had a cape and a bucket hat... some plastic buckets. And we'd run around saying, "To the rescue!"

AUDREY: [laugh] How old were you then? You must have been very young.

JOE: You know, just able to go to a movie. I suppose maybe just six or seven.

these fabulous ice creams every weekend. Actually, I don't know why I was an altar boy.

AUDREY: Well, maybe you liked the beauty of the music and the ...

JOE: Well, to this day I love ceremony. That's one of the reasons I remain Catholic. Although I think the Episcopalians are even more so.
AUDREY: What was the other ice cream parlor?

JOE: It was called The Splendid. And they made their own candy. And I remember the woman who worked in the back there dipping chocolate. And if your hands were too warm, you could not dip chocolate. And so once in a while I would sneak back there and watch her; and it was true, she was rolling this chocolate, and putting it down, and making a little design on the top which showed if it were strawberry or chocolate or something. That was something they had which the other [ice cream parlor] didn't have. The other one [Athens] was owned by a Greek man named George. And George had a limp. He had one leg that was quite a bit shorter than the other. So you could see him coming, moving from side to side. And he had a pinball machine. And we could play the pinball machine there, and if we won a lot, he would pay us.

AUDREY: In chocolate or money?

JOE: In money, but we would spend it there, you know. The pin ball machines were five cents. And so maybe you'd win five quarters. And he would pay you. And so you'd go back to the pinball machine and you'd put it all back. Just like they do in the slot machines.

AUDREY: He sounds like a nice man.

JOE: He was a wonderful man. He went to school with my Mother. He knew my Mother so well. And my Mother was always glad when we went there. But now I have everything I could want. I have the most wonderful thing happening to me on Father's Day. I'm on an absolutely natural high. I'm going to have at my house on Father's Day all twelve of my grandchildren and all six of my children (and their [spouses]). And my wife misunderstands when I say, "I want to do this as if it's the last time I'm gonna do it." And I think more people should say that to themselves. That doesn't mean you're gonna die. But if you're gonna do it and you really want it to be right, do it as though it's the last time you're ever gonna do it. She takes that as my saying you think you might be dead next year. Well, you know, maybe. But I'm not even thinking of dying. I have no intention of dying.

END OF INTERVIEW

**Joe & Lucy, 1998**
**50th Anniversary Celebration of Parkview Salon**

To: leahg@sfgate.com
From: norwood@teatrade.com
Subject: Joe Jachetta

Dear Leah Garchik--
>
I was delighted to learn that you're writing about my friend of over 20 years, Mr. Joseph Jachetta, the unofficial mayor of North Beach. As I think you know, this coming Saturday June 6 Joe's clientele are giving him a party celebrating his 50 years as proprietor of Parkview Beauty Salon (622 Union, I believe it is) on Washington Square Park. But I wonder if you're aware that all those years of pin-curls and permanents--plus the work of his wife Lucy teaching in the parochial schools--put all 6 of their children through college (including a Ph.D. no less). With the grandchildren, this total clan is true tribute to Joe and Lucy--a wholly FUNCTIONAL, happy family! I don't know how many such I've ever run across; certainly the toxic families we've grown used to reading about seem far commoner these days.
>
Joe is proof that a master hairdresser is much more than a minor artist of sorts but is also an important pillar in his clients' lives, a friend, advisor, and healer in a general sort of way. Joe's ministrations leave each person feeling better-looking and just better--- period. This, I think, is the result of a very literal laying on of hands, but whatever the secret, the man unfailingly makes everybody he deals with feel better. How many have spent a lifetime doing that?
>
Joe's doesn't have a clientele but life-long relationships for the most part. Many have been customers for as long as Joe's been in business and some have kown him even longer, like the woman who grew up next door to him or like the redoutable Rose Pistolla, who was a friend of his parents. He's pledged to stay in business as long as they need him and more than once has kept his word to do a lady's hair for the last time once she's laid in her coffin. As an institution in our Italian community, Parkview Salon is right up there with Sts. Peter and Paul Church.
>
>Joe served in Patton's army in the closing years of World War II as a forward artillery spotter, probably the most dangerous possible assignment. Once he was isolated behind enemy lines and missing in action for 19 days. He was among the first to enter the liberated camp at Dachau and a few years ago, on the anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi camps, a Dachau survivor placed a commemorative medal around Joe's neck saying it's on account of him she's still alive. In less dramatic ways, I think Joe has saved a lot of lives over the years since through his kindness and understanding and humor. He's an energetic rascal who never takes himself very seriously, but somehow he's discovered the secret of happiness, that least yet greatest of human attainments.
>
>There cannot be many individuals like Joe Jachetta in any community and ours is a better, happier place because we have him. Nobody's more worthy of a salute, not to mention a party! If you're able to drop by Parkview on Saturday, you'll see what I mean. And I suspect he'll be quite flattered if you decide to write about him. I'm currently serving as president of our neighborhood organization North Beach Neighbors and you can quote me on how very much the man means to all of us here.
>
>With all best wishes
>

JACHETTA ORAL HISTORY, COPY # 2

After you have read this history, please return it to:

Audrey Tomaselli
6 Gerke Alley
San Francisco CA 94133
415-391-1792